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KT photo | **Tim Bath**
**Rob Burgess, Tribune night editor**

# House of Burgess: Ferguson, Missouri, could be anywhere

### Department of Justice releases scathing report

**By Rob Burgess**
**Tribune columnist**

On March 4, the U.S. Department of Justice's Civil Rights Division issued a scathing report on Missouri's Ferguson Police Department — the long-awaited results of the investigation that began Sept. 4, 2014.

Allow me to save you about 100 pages of reading: It's all your worst fears about institutional racism, debtors' prisons and constitutional violations laid

bare. (The First, Fourth and 14th amendments being particularly abused.) Another scandal is introduced or reinforced nearly every page.

“Ferguson’s law enforcement practices are shaped by the city’s focus on revenue rather than by public safety needs,” reads the report. “Further, Ferguson’s police and municipal court practices both reflect and exacerbate existing racial bias, including racial stereotypes.”

Per the report:

• Ferguson’s black population is 67 percent, according to the 2010 Census.

• Of the 54 sworn officers currently serving in FPD, four are black.

• Blacks accounted for 85 percent of FPD’s traffic stops, 90 percent of FPD’s citations and 93 percent of FPD’s arrests from 2012 to 2014.

• Blacks are 2.07 times more likely to be searched during a vehicular stop, but are 26 percent less likely to have contraband found on them during a search. They are 2 times more likely to receive a citation and 2.37 times more likely to be arrested following a vehicular stop.

• Blacks accounted for 88 percent of all cases from 2010 to August 2014 in which an FPD officer reported using force. In all 14 uses of force involving a canine bite, the person was black.

“We discovered emails circulated by police supervisors and court staff that stereotype racial minorities as criminals, including one email that joked about an abortion by an African American woman being a means of crime control,” read the report.

This is now the sixth column I’ve written about Ferguson, and even I was shocked. The blatant hypocrisy was astonishing. “The judge in Ferguson who is accused of fixing traffic tickets for himself and colleagues ... also owes more than $170,000 in unpaid taxes,” reported the Guardian’s Jon Swaine on Friday. “Ronald J. Brockmeyer, whose court allegedly jailed impoverished defendants unable to pay fines of a few hundred dollars, has a string of outstanding debts to the U.S. government dating back to 2007, according to tax filings obtained by the Guardian from authorities in Missouri.”

The Supreme Court of Missouri announced immediate action. “To help restore public trust and confidence in the Ferguson municipal court division, [we] transferred Judge Roy L. Richter of the Missouri Court of Appeals, Eastern District, to the St. Louis County circuit court,” they stated Monday. The dominoes continued to fall. “Capt. Rick Henke and Sgt. William Mudd resigned Thursday over the emails ... city spokesman Jeff Small said on Friday, citing the city attorney,” reported CNN’s Ralph Ellis on Friday. “The city’s top court clerk, Mary Ann Twitty, was fired earlier this week in connection with the emails.”

It also was announced former Officer Darren Wilson would not face federal charges. In the fallout, the Michael Brown family remained committed to see this case tried civilly. “Attorney Daryl Parks said ... the city of Ferguson and Wilson would be named in the wrongful death lawsuit, which they plan to file promptly,” reported The Associated Press Thursday.

Still, many places are even worse on these issues than Ferguson. “If the shooting of Brown had ... occurred three and a half miles to the north, the world’s attention might have turned to the city of Florissant, where in 2013, the police stopped black motorists at a rate nearly three times their share of the population. Less than four miles to the northwest, in Calverton Park, court fines and fees accounted for over 40 percent of the city’s general operating revenue last year,” reported Campbell Robertson, Shaila Dewan and Matt Apuzzo for The New York Times on Sunday.

This is a problem in far more places, which is why the protests took hold. Ferguson, Missouri, could be anywhere.

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